

## Heard on the Hill

Senate panel approves aid to Israel. The Senate Appropriations Committee by a vote of 28-1 approved \$2.4 billion in military aid to Israel as part of the upcoming fiscal year's foreign-aid bill. The bill, which includes key provisions to allow Israel to maximize its aid, also provides \$40 million in assistance to help Israel absorb refugees from the former Soviet Union and other countries. Sens. FRANK LAUTENBERG (D-NJ), SAM BROWNBACK (R-KS), BARBARA MIKULSKI (D-MD), ROBERT BENNETT (R-UT), RICHARD DURBIN (D-IL), MARY LANDRIEU (D-LA) and DANIEL INOUE (D-HI) played key roles in shepherding the pro-Israel provisions of the bill through the committee.

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House calls for charging Ahmadinejad for incitement to genocide. The House passed a resolution by a vote of 411-2 that calls on the U.N. Security Council to charge Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with violating the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention because of his calls for the destruction of the state of Israel. Reps. DENNIS KUCINICH (D-OH) and RON PAUL (R-TX) voted against the measure. "I am questioning whether or not [Ahmadinejad] is trying to destroy Israel," Kucinich said in a floor statement, challenging the accuracy of abundantly documented translations of Ahmadinejad's threats against Israel. The resolution was sponsored by Reps. STEVEN ROTHMAN (D-NJ) and MARK KIRK (R-IL).

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House bill prohibits sale of spare F-14 parts to Iran. The House passed legislation by voice vote that prohibits the Pentagon from selling surplus F-14 fighter jet parts to Iran. The Stop Arming Iran Act asserts that the sale of such parts "could make it more difficult to confront the nuclear weapons capability of Iran and would strengthen the ground war capability of Iran." The legislation was sponsored by Reps. GABRIELLE GIFFORDS (D-AZ) and STEVE PEARCE (R-NM). •NER•

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# NEAR EAST

## Report

JULY 15-30, 2007

AIPAC'S BIWEEKLY ON AMERICAN  
MIDDLE EAST POLICY

### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

#### An Uneasy Anniversary

One year ago, Iran-backed Hizballah kidnapped Israeli soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser in an unprovoked cross-border raid from Lebanon, sparking a summer war. A year later, it is glaringly obvious that the international community must do more to defuse the threat along Israel's northern front.

After the conflict, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1701, outlawing arms smuggling across the Syrian-Lebanese border. Despite the resolution, the flow of arms to Hizballah terrorists has continued in alarming proportions. Under the resolution, the mandate of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was expanded to include working with the Lebanese army to keep Hizballah forces away from Israel.

Despite their increased numbers and responsibilities, UNIFIL troops are unable to prevent the arms smuggling. Their mandate allows them to deploy to the Syrian-Lebanese border only if the Lebanese government asks them to do so. Syrian threats have deterred Beirut from issuing that request.

Last summer, Hizballah fired more than 4,000 rockets into Israel, killing 43 ...see *Editor's Comments cont'd on pg. 54*

## Alarming Evidence

REVELATIONS ABOUT IRAN'S NUCLEAR  
WORK STIR INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

Recent statements by Iranian officials and satellite photos of the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites have each fueled international concerns about Tehran's illicit atomic program.

The satellite images were released earlier this month by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) and depict what are apparently tunnels adjacent to buildings where Iran processes uranium for enrichment, a key step toward assembling nuclear arms.

"The tunnel complex certainly appears to be related" to Iran's main enrichment site at Natanz, said David Albright, head



Photo by the Associated Press

*Iran's nuclear work has moved forward under the Islamic Republic's top leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.*

of the ISIS and a former U.N. nuclear weapons inspector.

The discovery raises questions about whether Iran is hiding elements of its nuclear program from the U.N. Security Council, which has twice sanctioned Tehran for its refusal to give up enrichment.

Iran has a long history of constructing tunnels to hide and protect nuclear and military equipment.

In 1996, the head of the U.S. military's Central Command disclosed that the United States had uncovered evidence that Iran was tunneling near its southern coastline. Central Command believed the tunnels were to be used to store advanced missiles.

In December 2004, U.N. inspectors uncovered construction of an underground tunnel at the uranium conversion plant in ...see *Alarming Evidence cont'd on pg. 54*

# NER INTERVIEWS

BARRY RUBIN, PROFESSOR AND AUTHOR, *THE TRUTH ABOUT SYRIA*

Dr. Barry Rubin is the director of the Global Research for International Affairs (GLORIA) Center of the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, Israel. His latest book is entitled *The Truth about Syria* (Palgrave, 2007). Near East Report recently spoke to Dr. Rubin about the Syrian regime and the threats it poses to U.S. interests.



Photo courtesy of Barry Rubin

According to author Barry Rubin, Syria's regime relies on scapegoating the United States and Israel.

**Near East Report:** How has the Syrian regime under Hafez Assad and his son Bashar managed to survive for almost four decades despite its many failures?

**Barry Rubin:** Indeed, the Assad regime has failed to provide a better life for the Syrian people, to defeat Israel and to unify the Arab world. Furthermore, it's largely controlled by a small non-Muslim and widely despised minority called the Alawites. Given all this, we would have expected the regime to fall long ago. It has managed to defy gravity through the use of ideology, authoritarianism and the building of hatred and scapegoats, namely Israel, the West and the United States. The bottom line is that the regime needs the Arab-Israeli conflict for its very survival. What we should have understood after the regime rejected Israel's offer to return the Golan in 2000 is that the conflict is the regime's main asset.

**NER:** So the return of the Golan is not a priority for the Assad regime?

**BR:** Suppose Syria gets the Golan back;

what happens? There are celebrations for a few days. And then people say, Okay, the conflict is over, so now let's have an open economy, let's have democracy, let's have free speech, let's have citizens' rights, let's not spend all our money on the military. That's what will happen, and the regime knows it. So if you kick away the Golan crutch, the regime falls.

If there is peace, moreover, Israel becomes a normal player in the region and U.S. influence increases. And that too is a disaster for the Syrian regime, because both the United States and Israel will then oppose Syria's ambitions. Damascus needs to control Lebanon, among other things because Lebanon is where it gets its money. The Syrian economy doesn't generate income, so looting Lebanon has helped keep the regime afloat. It also wants to control the Palestinians. To promote these ambitions, intransigence is built into the nature of the regime. It's not just a misunderstanding, or about a few yards along the Sea of Galilee. It's about the very survival of the regime and its regional ambitions.

**NER:** Why, despite these weaknesses, is Syria in position to matter so much?

**BR:** What the regime can do is cause trouble. In Lebanon, for example, it has now staged 16 major terrorist attacks—mostly assassination attempts, many of which have succeeded. It's basically the mentality of the mafia: You do what we want or we'll kill you. And it's working. People in the West—even in the United States—are afraid of Syria and are offering it concessions. For the Syrian regime, threats and violence are paying off; why would it want to change?

**NER:** So you don't believe there's a benefit in engaging Syria?

**BR:** No. The Syrians know how to play the game. While providing military equipment to Israel's and America's enemies, they keep saying, "We want to engage, we want peace."

But what they're really after is to stop the creation of the tribunal for trying the assassination of [former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq] Hariri. They are really

scared of this tribunal because among the people on the list are the second- and third-most powerful people in Syria, namely Bashar Assad's brother and brother-in-law. The regime's talk about peace is merely a means for sidetracking the international community from the Hariri tribunal.

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**SYRIA MUST KNOW THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT ENGAGE IT UNTIL IT CHANGES ITS POLICY, THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT TALK TO IT UNTIL IT ACTS TO STOP THE TERRORISM IT BACKS.**

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**NER:** Can Syria be flipped from its alliance with Iran?

**BR:** Syria gets a lot out of this alliance. First, the two regimes are partners on three major issues: Iraq, Lebanon and Palestinians; they work together on the same side with the same groups (in Iraq the groups are different, but the interests are the same). Second, Syria gets a lot of Iranian economic aid and investments in government enterprises, which are absolutely critical to its economic survival. Third, it gets protection from U.S. or Israeli reprisals. And finally, it gets Islamist cover with its own population. So why should the regime quit this alliance? What are you going to offer it in return? All you can offer is commercial investment—but that means opening up the Syrian economy, which would break the regime's control over the economy on which its survival depends.

**NER:** How should America approach Syria?

**BR:** Tough diplomacy. The Syrian regime must be pressed. It must know that the United States will not engage it until it changes its policy; that Israel will not talk to it until it really does something to stop the terrorism it's inciting; that the United States gives strong support to Israel and to Lebanon, and is trying to persuade the Europeans to do the same. We have the stronger cards. There's no need to offer unilateral concessions. •NER•

# Corps of Terror

**IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS IS DEEPLY INVOLVED IN TERRORISM ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST BUT REMAINS VULNERABLE TO STRICT SANCTIONS IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

As Iran's illicit nuclear program continues to draw international headlines, an elite arm of the Islamic Republic's military is striving to increase Tehran's influence and spread terrorism across the Middle East while remaining largely under the radar.

The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) arms, funds and trains terrorist networks from Gaza to Afghanistan.

The force also controls a large part of the Iranian economy, including a substantial portion of the country's oil and gas industry. Because of these extensive financial interests, policymakers view the Guard as a target for sanctions designed to contain Iran.

## The IRGC Has a Decades-Long History of Terrorism

Formed in 1979 at the birth of Iran's Islamic revolution, the IRGC exists largely separate from and parallel to Iran's regular army.

The Guard has a long history of terrorism, and has been implicated in the 1994 bombing of an Argentina Jewish Center and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia. The IRGC was also behind the recent capture of British sailors in the Persian Gulf.

In addition to their military activities, the Guard's commanders also have an extensive stake in Iran's economy.

Estimates peg the Revolutionary Guard's share of the nation's economy at roughly 40 percent, and companies tied to the elite unit and its commanders have been awarded billions of dollars worth of government contracts, including lucrative projects in the energy sector.

## The Guard Poses a Present Threat to the U.S. and Its Allies

A special branch of the IRGC, the al-Quds (Jerusalem) Force, is providing funds, weapons, training and technology to terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hizballah and the Taliban.

In Iraq, U.S. military spokesman Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Bergner said the Quds force has trained Iraqi insurgents in camps outside Tehran. There, they were schooled in the use of mortars, rockets, improvised

explosive devises and other lethal tools.

Another beneficiary of al-Quds funding is Hamas. In February, Hamas supreme leader Khaled Meshaal met with Quds force officials to set up a supply route to smuggle rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank missiles, guns and explosives across the porous border between the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Mahmoud Zahar, formerly foreign minister in the Hamas-led Palestinian government, admitted in a recent interview to personally carrying millions of dollars from Iran to Gaza.

According to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, "it's pretty clear that there's a fairly substantial flow of weapons" from Iran to the Taliban in Afghanistan. The al-Quds force is also playing a key role in arming Syria and providing weapons and training to Hizballah terrorists in Lebanon.

## The IRGC is Vulnerable to U.S. and International Sanctions

As a result of the Guard's centrality to the Iranian economy, tough U.S. and international financial measures targeting the IRGC may have a substantial impact on the Guard's willingness to press ahead with its nuclear efforts.

The U.N. Security Council, which called the Iranian nuclear program a threat to global peace and security, has passed two binding resolutions targeting several Guard commanders, freezing their assets and barring U.N. member states from conducting business with them.

Meanwhile, Congress is considering the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act, which seeks to toughen financial penalties against foreign companies that do business with Iran—in particular in the oil and gas sector that is largely controlled by the IRGC.

By choking off IRGC financial pipelines, American policymakers hope to limit its ability to harm U.S. allies and interests in the Middle East and pressure the Iranian government to drop its radical agenda. •NER•

## VANGUARD OF VIOLENCE

REGIONAL HOT SPOTS WHERE IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARD IS BACKING TERRORISM



### GAZA

Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal has reportedly met with the Guard to arrange arms supplies to his terror group.



### LEBANON

Hizballah, the terrorist army in southern Lebanon led by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, has been funded and equipped by the Guard.



### IRAQ

American commanders have accused the Guard of providing explosives to terrorists targeting U.S. troops.



### AFGHANISTAN

The Guard has supplied weapons and money to forces affiliated with the Taliban.



civilians and wounding thousands. Since then, Hizballah chief Hassan Nasrallah has boasted that his terrorist army has amassed tens of thousands of additional rockets and that the group "could launch between 1,000 and 3,000 rockets daily" at Israel.

Nasrallah has made his aggressive intentions chillingly clear. Early in 2007, he asserted that "the future of Israel is death and perdition. The future of our nation is one of life, freedom and regaining the holy places. Our martyrs inscribed in blood during the July-August war: Death to Israel."

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said that Hizballah's statements "are an open admission of activities that constitute a direct violation" of Security Council resolutions and urged Syria and Iran to "ensure full implementation" the measures. Such words are welcome, but the international community must follow up with strong actions.

Beyond Hizballah's rearmament, other worrisome signs are coming out of Lebanon. Syria has been implicated in the assassination of several Lebanese politicians. Furthermore, pro-Syrian Hizballah legislators have withdrawn from the government, paralyzing the democratic process in Lebanon and setting the stage for more unrest.

Given Hizballah's ascendance and foreign meddling in Lebanon's affairs, the international community must deal assertively with the threats. A weak-kneed approach now is likely to lead to more violence later. •NER•

## Junior Jihad

FEATURING A RIP-OFF OF A POPULAR DISNEY CHARACTER, HAMAS TELEVISION HAS AIMED TO DEVELOP A NEW GENERATION OF PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS

The Palestinian terrorist group Hamas' official station, al-Aqsa TV, recently attracted international attention for a children's program that featured a hate-mongering, unlicensed clone of Disney's Mickey Mouse.

The children's program, called "Tomorrow's Pioneers," sparked an outcry after the jihadist mouse Farfur and his co-host Saraa, a teenage girl, were shown glorifying the murder of Jews and suicide bombings alongside lessons about the importance of daily prayer and drinking milk.

The show's audience also heard tales about Hamas' role in establishing Islamic rule over the entire world through conquest and domination of non-Muslims.

In one episode, Saraa says, "We remind you that we, the great ones, started this program to lead the world. The nucleus, with the will of Allah, will be from here, from Palestine." Farfur then asks, "From

Palestine, oh Saraa, what do you mean? From Gaza, Jerusalem, Ramallah, or all of Palestine?" The teen narrator responds, "From all of Palestine."

Responding to international condemnation of the program, Hamas announced that it would pull the mouse from the show. In Farfur's final episode, al-Aqsa TV depicted the mouse being beaten to death by a Jewish interrogator after refusing to sell Palestinian land.

Following Farfur's death, the show's teenage narrator Saraa declares, "Yes, our children friends, we lost our dearest friend, Farfur. Farfur turned to a Martyr while protecting his land. He turned into a Martyr at the hands of the criminals, and murderers. The murderers of the innocent children."

Illustrating the program's impact, a three-year-old girl then called in to the program to say: "We don't like the Jews because they are dogs! We will fight them!" •NER•

### Alarming Evidence....cont'd from pg. 51

Isfahan. Iran failed to notify the International Atomic Energy Agency about the construction in a timely manner and did not admit to construction of the tunnel until May 2005.


The recent photos of the Natanz digging coincided with an official report of a significant advance in Iran's nuclear work.

According to a top Iranian official, Tehran no longer requires outside help to

manufacture centrifuges, the machines that conduct enrichment by spinning uranium gas at high speeds.

"All parts of centrifuges are built inside Iran. Each part is built in various parts of the country. Then they are assembled at one place," said Ali Akbar Velayati, the international affairs adviser to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. •NER•

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